

## HB 5399: Testimony of the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association, February 2011

Mister/Madam Chairman, Members of the CGA Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding HB 5399. We represent the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association, which includes the majority of Connecticut-licensed veterinarians as its members.

We believe HB 5399 is a long overdue correction of an exception in oversight of the practice of veterinary medicine by the Department of Public Health.

CGS Title 20, Chapter 197 states: *"No person shall practice veterinary medicine, surgery or dentistry until he has obtained a license as provided in section 20-199."* CGS Title 20, Chapter 197 further defines veterinary medicine: *"A person shall be construed to practice veterinary medicine, surgery or dentistry, within the meaning of this chapter, who holds himself out as being able to diagnose, administer biologics for, treat, operate or prescribe for any animal or bird disease, pain, injury, deformity or physical condition, or who either offers or undertakes, by any means or methods, to diagnose, administer biologics for, treat, operate or prescribe for any animal or bird disease, pain, injury, deformity or physical condition."*

Thereafter, the Chapter goes on to create an exception to the practice of veterinary medicine, allowing euthanasia to be performed by or on the order of individuals other than licensed veterinarians. This exception is then inexplicably directed solely for the benefit of the not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization known as the *Connecticut Humane Society*. No mention is made of what personnel may be involved in the decision-making or hands on implementation for this exception to the law governing the practice of veterinary medicine, the training required, who provides that training or who oversees implementation of euthanasia. Finally, no mention is made of any other, similar organizations that receive a similar exception. Indeed no mention is made in law as to why this exception exists or how it was created.

Euthanasia is a medical procedure, which requires broadly developed skills in animal assessment, animal restraint, use of medical devices, intravenous catheterization, as well as detailed knowledge of the use of, and safety considerations for, powerful federally and state scheduled narcotic drugs. The decision-making process leading to euthanasia requires an in depth knowledge of the health and behavioral characteristics of domestic animals gained through the specific education of a veterinarian. It also requires a veterinary license as well as federal and state scheduled drug licenses to order and utilize the drugs required for euthanasia, and the recordkeeping required is the direct responsibility of a licensed veterinarian. Failure to ensure proper use of and documentation for such drugs is an offense not infrequently disciplined by the Connecticut Board of Veterinary Medicine and Connecticut Department of Public Health as well as the US Drug Enforcement Administration. Finally, the recent controversy at the Connecticut Humane Society, which led to the departure of its former executive director, was in no small part aggravated by public complaints involving the euthanasia of animals by non-veterinarians working there.

It is time to eliminate this unnecessary and arbitrary exception to the definition of the practice of veterinary medicine and bring all euthanasia oversight and implementation back under the control of the Department of Public Health, via its authority to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine. Our animals deserve no less.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association